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## A NEW ERA IN AMERICAN FORESTRY

President Theodore Roosevelt ushered in the Conservation Era, which gave birth to the Forest Service and started the growth of resource management.

Today, those of us who watch and take part in the growth of forestry are privileged to witness the birth of another era -- I call it the era of resource unification.

Traditionally, forest resource activities in the United States have been divided into three areas: Federal land management, State and private land management, and research -- and there have been barriers between the three.

Finally, in 1977, those barriers are beginning to fall. We are beginning to realize a new unity in resource management.

As one of the first steps in looking at resource management nationwide, I made a commitment in the Department of Agriculture to full and real coordination of resource programs throughout the Department. One of my main goals as Assistant Secretary is to infuse a new environmental ethic into USDA programs -- not only National Forest management, but all forestry, soil, water and other natural resource programs.

Our own sensitivity to the environment has been inadequate at USDA. We can hardly expect private owners to demonstrate environmental concerns unless the national government leads the way. And we at USDA are committed to providing that leadership.

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Remarks by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research & Education, at the American Forestry Association Meeting, Monterey, California, October 17, 1977.

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The environment does not recognize man's artificial boundaries. And we cannot let environmental concern end at the Federal boundaries. All the parts of resource management must be considered as parts of a whole. Our forest lands may be in different ownerships, but they remain environmentally dependent upon each other.

For years, the National Forests have commanded more attention than the research program and the state and private forestry program combined. Perhaps because of this intense interest, we now have a good beginning on better management of public lands.

Two major laws signaled the final breakthrough -- the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

After a period of intense pressure and tremendous debate, we seem to have arrived at a new understanding of the role and purposes of the National Forests.

The Resources Planning Act came first. It calls for periodic assessments of all the renewable resources in the Nation, under all forms of ownership. Never before have we had such a comprehensive base of resource information from which Federal agencies, States, and private owners, can build long-range programs.

The Act requires the Forest Service to present a long-range program of its activities to the President and Congress every five years. This program is then to be the focal point of the budget process.

The Forests Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee, chaired by Congressman James Weaver of Oregon, held oversight hearings on the first assessment in several locations across the country.



Congress used the program to develop the 1978 budget. The House Appropriations Committee recommended funding at 85 percent of the proposed program level. The Conference Committee compromised at about 83 percent.

I firmly believe that the RPA program is now established as the basis for funding the Forest Service. But this does not mean that funding will be perpetuated without complete justification, since the RPA requires an annual evaluation of Forest Service accomplishments. Beyond that, the Administration is using zero-base budgeting each fiscal year, and that requires thorough and objective justification for every dollar in every program.

The National Forest Management Act built on the RPA, and then went even further. It calls for long-range planning -- interdisciplinary planning -- and public involvement throughout that planning.

One major innovation requires a committee of scientists to advise the Department on land management planning throughout the National Forest system.

This month, the committee should have a draft of proposed regulations, and we hope to seek public comment on them early next year. About next April, the regulations should be final. Using these regulations, we hope to complete land management plans for all National Forests by 1983 -- a good two years ahead of the deadline set by Congress.

For many years, the Department of Agriculture has wanted to develop forestry programs based on long-range planning, tied to adequate budgets, and matched to the needs of the people. Now, we have that and much more.

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Through the RPA and the National Forest Management Act, we have an unshakable commitment to public involvement in all programs. It is real public involvement -- as much as improved funding and long-range goals -- that will make our programs really responsive to the needs of the people. And it is this public involvement that will force the unification of all forestry programs.

Public involvement will, I hope, at least partially resolve one of the most heated controversies facing the Department of Agriculture today.

In August, I initiated a new review of roadless areas -- RARE II -- to try to settle some of the controversy surrounding potential wilderness areas on the National Forests.

As you may remember, half a dozen years ago, the Forest Service attempted to set priorities for studying roadless and undeveloped areas, through a process called the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation. The Forest Service used rather broad criteria for considering roadless areas. But Congress was rather strict in considering specific wilderness proposals.

As a result, the standards for wilderness study areas varied across the country. Many people were dissatisfied with the tentative classification given to some roadless areas. Many land management plans were taken to court. And many "piecemeal" legislative solutions were proposed.

This was the situation in March when I became Assistant Secretary -- and it soon became clear to me that it was time to take another run at resolving the roadless areas controversy.

RARE II has two basic aims:

First, we want to determine which roadless areas are needed to round out a quality National Wilderness Preservation System.



And second, we want to determine which roadless areas should no longer be considered for wilderness -- so they can be managed for non-wilderness uses.

Areas which fall between these two categories would be handled in the more traditional planning or study processes.

This summer, the Forest Service held 227 workshops on RARE II, which drew almost 17,000 participants, reflecting a strong nationwide interest in wilderness.

The public commented on the inventory of roadless areas, and on criteria that should be used for considering wilderness designation. The final inventory list is just about ready, and we will start evaluating areas soon. We hope to hold another round of formal public involvement -- probably about the middle of 1978. RARE II will be completed by the end of 1978, and on that basis we will make some sort of recommendation to Congress.

The philosophy of the Carter Administration is that all lands should be used to their best advantage. It follows logically that the public lands must provide those products or services to which private lands are not well suited, or which cannot provide a reasonable profit to owners. Wilderness, and dispersed recreation, are classic examples of such uses.

But, at the same time, we have to recognize that as public lands accommodate more amenity uses, private lands will have to produce more commodities, such as timber, livestock forage and developed recreation.

The private, non-industrial forest lands have tremendous potential. With proper management, they can help meet resource needs, contribute to the economy and enhance the environment. But, to more fully realize this potential, we must strengthen our programs to help private owners.



In building a strong forestry assistance program, the Administration has given us three broad guidelines:

1. Minimize Government interference in the affairs of individual owners;
2. Provide effective assistance programs that will achieve the objectives of forest landowners, as well as meet public or national needs; and
3. Make sure that the activities of the Federal government and its cooperators strengthen the economic foundation and environmental quality of rural America.

We recognize and respect the objective of many private forest landowners to simply enjoy their own unmanaged mini-wilderness. We will not try to persuade everyone to practice intensive forestry.

But, at the same time, we recognize that many thousands of private owners do want to manage their lands, but do not have the capital or the know-how to do it successfully.

Private, non-industrial forest lands hold the greatest forestry potential in the country. And President Carter has called these lands "the greatest challenge to forestry today."

For the first time in memory, a President has placed state and private forestry programs on an equal footing with public forest management. In his environmental message last May, the President called on the Department of Agriculture to make a comprehensive study of all cooperative forestry programs. Again, this is another step in the unification of American forestry.



We have completed this study -- entitled "The Federal Role in the Conservation and Management of Private Nonindustrial Forest Lands." The study itself is a tribute to inter-agency cooperation. The Forest Service, Extension Service, Soil Conservation Service and Cooperative State Research Service were directly involved in producing the report. It also involved the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. The report was completed in 10 weeks and sent to the President on September 13. The writers drew heavily from many previously-published reports. One of the most valuable references was AFA's "Trees for People" Task Force Report of 1973.

The newly-completed report recommends six principles for public forestry assistance:

1. First, and perhaps obviously, all Federal expenditures must be consistent with and support laws and policies that form national environmental goals.
2. The effect of all potential Federal expenditures on the entire complex of forest resources should be carefully evaluated.
3. Preference for Federal spending should be given to programs which strengthen the capabilities of State and local agencies.
4. If private forest lands are located in areas of environmental concern -- such as the headwaters of frequently-flooding rivers or the scarce habitats of endangered animals -- then public technical assistance should include precisely-drawn prescriptions for these concerns.

5. Normally, when many alternatives for Federal assistance exist, priority should be given to options which produce both commodities and nonmarketable goods, services and benefits, emphasizing the "best management practices" for all resources.

6. Forestry incentive payments from public funds should include an agreement with the landowner to ensure accountability for the expenditures and achievement of agreed-upon objectives.

Two other concerns emerged as we wrote the report. First of all, we need, as soon as possible, a system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all cooperative forestry programs. Second, we must develop the information needed to design, implement and redirect cooperative forestry programs more effectively.

The report identified four general avenues of approach:

- Education
- Technical assistance
- Incentives
- And, assistance to States in developing State forestry plans.

Better education programs, both for the landowner and the general public, are clearly needed. They provide the landowner with a rational basis to decide how to manage his land. And they help the public better understand the environmental considerations and alternatives for managing, protecting and using all forest resources.



Technical assistance must be strengthened if we are to increase the productivity of private forest land. We need better methods of setting priorities for providing technical assistance. And we must improve the system of delivering assistance to the landowner. For example, we may be able to provide services through groups or associations of landowners.

Incentive programs must be enlarged. Cost-sharing for private lands can be more cost-effective and get more trees into the ground. The short-run emphasis could be on cost-share programs, while the long-term emphasis could be on credit or loan programs and tax adjustments. Our study concludes that cost-sharing on private timber lands can be more cost-effective than making similar investments on public lands.

One area of incentives we believe worthy of greater consideration is the idea of a State harvest or severance tax. This would provide cost-sharing incentives to the private landowner through a state tax on forest products which is supplemented by the State ad valorem tax.

This approach assumes that each group with an economic interest in the continued production of wood from private forest lands -- the forest industry, forest landowners, and the consumer -- also should share in the investment necessary to maintain that supply. The Federal role in this approach has shifted to research and grants for forestry planning. This approach is now being used in Virginia and Mississippi and we understand it will be initiated in North Carolina in 1978.

The harvest tax concept is one of several tax approaches that are suggested in the report. These are a part of an overall incentives approach that includes Federal cost-sharing, credit, insurance and others.

And, finally, we are encouraging each state forester to consider State forestry planning, as an integral part of the RPA Assessment and Program. State forestry plans will permit States to select and emphasize the approaches that work best for them. Planning will also result in better coordination, and a combination of State, Federal and private efforts that can be targeted toward specific forestry goals.

Not addressed in the report, but presently being considered in follow-up actions, are the roles of all USDA agencies with forestry responsibilities in carrying out a broadened forestry program. My objective is a team effort. There will be no competition among the USDA agencies as to who serves the landowner. We will build cooperative forestry programs that will complement each other.

To this end, the USDA Forestry Planning Committee, in a meeting on October 13 and 14, examined the roles of our agencies. People involved in administering these programs in the States were a part of this meeting. Further, the State and Private Forestry Advisory Committee, in their biennial meeting later this month in Michigan, will consider better coordination among agencies.

I've discussed two elements of American forestry -- Federal lands and State and private lands. The third element -- research -- is also being challenged to more fully meet the needs of Americans -- and the research community shows every sign of meeting that challenge.

To live up to this responsibility to the fullest, the Nation's major forestry researchers are developing the National Program of Research for Forests and Associated Rangelands. The program is a joint effort of the Forest Service, the Cooperative State Research Service and 61 forestry schools.



This group represents about two-thirds of the forestry research in the U.S. not counting product development and improved manufacturing processes, which are mainly carried out by industry.

The group will hold a National Work Conference in January at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. to chart forestry research programs for the next 10 years.

The group is also taking a critical look at the research policies which we ought to be pursuing. I understand that it is recommending, among other policies, better packaging and delivery of research findings to all users, and better extension and technical assistance programs to get research findings to small landowners and others.

Over the past few months I have repeatedly stressed the need for full coordination and cooperation among USDA agencies. The Cooperative Forestry Study and the National Program of Research are examples of our accomplishments in this area.

Last Thursday and Friday, I met with USDA agencies and their cooperators to better define roles in technology transfer -- and I think this is another step forward. I will continue to emphasize the necessity of improving the working relationships among Department of Agriculture agencies, and between the agencies and their cooperators. I hope to see similar favorable results from our efforts to establish better cooperation with state and local agencies as well.

We must have the best coordination and complete cooperation at all levels to make sure that natural resource programs serve the public and the landowner alike.

I mentioned earlier that the Resources Planning Act gave new life and better funding to all Forest Service programs. The National Forest Management Act went a step further for the National Forests.

Now, Congress is considering legislation that would draw both state and private forestry programs and research into the Resources Planning Act. New authorities would be needed if we are to make these areas fully compatible with present attitudes and policies affecting our National Forests.

One bill, H.R. 8020, introduced by Congressman Weaver, would amend the RPA to create a unified set of authorities for state and private forestry.

It would emphasize and encourage multiple use management on non-Federal forest lands. It would broaden and strengthen Federal assistance in a number of areas, including urban forestry. The rural forestry assistance section emphasizes wildlife and fish habitats and water quality, as well as timber production.

In short, the bill would streamline and expand our present programs, and would infuse a new environmental ethic into public programs directed toward the private sector. I want to especially thank Bill Towell and AFA for their part in providing a forum to develop this legislation. The Areas of Agreement Committee has functioned extremely well.

A similar bill, H.R. 8021, also introduced by Congressman Weaver, would deal with research on a similar, all-encompassing basis.

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the McSweeney-McNary Act, which is our basic authority for forestry research. It is a venerable piece of legislation, which has served us well. However, it needs updating and modernization if it is to reflect current concerns about the environment and productivity of resources.



The legislation is envisioned as a new title or section of the Resources Planning Act, which would more closely gear research to the planning cycles under the RPA. In short, it is designed to ensure that research funded with Federal dollars is truly in the best interest of the public.

Having spent a good part of my career as an extension forester, I know how important it is to get resource information to the users -- all users -- of our forests. Congressman Weaver has also proposed a bill to give support for extension forestry.

Although these proposals are likely to be changed in the legislative process, I think that forestry will see some major new laws. And, I think that updating authorities and responsibilities will be one of the links that solidly unifies American forestry.

It was in the 1920's that major legislation for cooperative forestry and research was first passed. Added to the work of Teddy Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold and other conservation leaders, the laws proved beyond a doubt that the Age of Conservation had come to America.

Today, with new ideas, new legislation and the involvement of an environmentally-concerned public, I think we are well on the way to a new era in America -- the unification of all forest resources to serve present and future generations.

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